

Mayor Bob Young
January 15, 2003

The City of Augusta is in support of maintaining appropriate water levels at Lake Thurmond during drought conditions by revising the drought contingency plan.

These revisions however should not be to the detriment of the environment or the water users of Augusta.

The Augusta Canal operates on the Savannah River for the purposes of providing waterpower to two operating textile mills, King Mill and Sibley Mill and a third commercial facility, the Enterprise Mill.

The canal also provides waterpower to the Augusta Raw Water Pumping Station.

The raw water pumped from this facility comprises approximately 70% of the municipal water needs for our community.

The canal, in addition, provides a navigable passage around the shoals on the Savannah River just above the downtown commercial business district.

The water release rate of 3000 cubic feet per second (cfs) being proposed by the Corps of Engineers during the Stage 3 Drought Plan will not provide an acceptable water flow to meet the needs of the water users on the Augusta Canal and provide sufficient water in the bypass reach of the Savannah River.

The City of Augusta is currently in the process of renewing our Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) License to operate the Augusta Canal.

During that process, our consulting engineers have been reviewing the release rates of Lake Thurmond and flow data on the Savannah River.

Their finds indicate that a more appropriate approach to controlling lake levels during drought conditions would be to modify the trigger thresholds between the Stage 2 and Stage 3 of the current Drought Contingency Plan.

This, in affect, would not allow water levels to reach critical stages before beginning the process of conserving flows coming into Lake Thurmond and the likelihood the reduction of flows to 3000 cfs should be avoided.

Today, I repeat my request for a “public hearing ” as called for in my December 19, 2002, letter to the Corps of Engineers.

The holding of these series of “public meetings” or “public forums” is not the same thing.

An official “public hearing” would trigger a required NEPA Environmental Statement. This environmental impact statement would include the study of water quality issue, fishery spawning issues, endangered species issues, etc.

I wish to reserve the right to submit additional documentation as appropriate.